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ABSTRACT

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EMPIRICALLY DEFINING COMPETENCIES FOR EFFECTIVE BILINGUAL TEACHERS: A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Generic and causal competencies for effective bilingual teachers have been defined through this study. Data have been collected with an operant interviewing method termed the Behavioral Event Analysis (BEA). The BEA was developed at Harvard University for the purpose of identifying competencies for effective job performance. In this study, 20 bilingual teachers were interviewed to differentiate those competencies demonstrated by "superior" bilingual teachers, compared to those of other bilingual teachers. Detailed descriptions of successful episodes and less successful episodes were elicited from the subjects. Behavioral episodes encompass the teachers' perceptions, thoughts, acts, feelings, and conclusions. A content analysis of interview transcriptions has yielded a set of competency clusters, which along with their accompanying sub-categories, reveal the following characteristics for the effective bilingual teacher: sociocultural knowledge, positive regard, non-authoritarianism, pedagogic flexibility, self-confidence, and communication skills. Given further validation of these competencies, teacher-educators can more adequately select potentially effective bilingual teachers, prepare effective bilingual teachers, and develop relevant teacher preparation curricula.

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*This paper was presented at the 1980 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Boston, Massachusetts, April 7-13, 1980.

INTRODUCTION

Legislative regulations and Board of Education guidelines press teacher trainers with myriad lists of bilingual teacher competencies. While all such competency lists are claimed to be synonymous with those of effective bilingual teachers, they are vulnerable to criticism for several reasons. First, there is as yet little or no empirical evidence that existing competencies are valid. Most competencies for bilingual teachers are generated by experts (Acosta and Blanco, 1978; Center for Applied Linguistics, 1974; CTPL, 1978). This makes them highly subjective and open to broad interpretation. Second, they do not easily lend themselves to standardization across institutions or even among the individuals to whom they are applied.

For example, according to the CTPL (1977), competency in a target culture is measured by cognitive knowledge of the life style of the target population and the historical role and contributions of the target population. Language competencies, on the other hand, list performance criteria of a more observable nature. A sample of the Commission's language competencies demands that bilingual teachers be able to use the target language in spontaneous conversation, read and comprehend texts appropriate to the authorization, and write effectively in a variety of contexts.

Still other competencies such as those required by the *Ryan Act* (1970) for teacher credentialing are stated in content or course terms. According to *Ryan* guidelines, a teacher training institution must certify that bilingual teachers have competency

in bilingual teaching strategies, performance-based instruction, and curriculum development. These competencies still vary from one institution's demands that the elementary bilingual teacher have a positive self-concept and respect for cultural diversity.

At the national level, competencies have been disseminated by Acosta and Blanco (1978). In broad terms, this publication offers competencies in the areas of language proficiency, cultural awareness, and pedagogical skills. Some examples of the behavioral criteria required in these competency areas are: explain basic principles of language and bilingualism, explain some basic ideas concerning the process of acculturation and assimilation, and explain basic principles of learning theory and apply them to the teaching-learning process. Because these competencies are to assist institutions, they are written as course objectives rather than teaching behaviors.

Another set of competencies for bilingual teachers widely accepted among educators was prepared by the Center for Applied Linguistics (1974). These competencies are the most comprehensive available to teacher trainers. They offer eight categories: language proficiency, linguistics, culture, instructional methods, curriculum utilization and adaptation, assessment, school-community relations, and supervised teaching. They also contain a personal qualities category. While the competencies offered in these categories are fairly comprehensive, they too are expert-produced, and thus are not empirically based.

An examination of the above examples of bilingual teacher competencies currently in use reveals that there is little consensus among experts about the set of competencies most appropriate to good bilingual teaching. As illustrated, competencies can be described in terms of required skills, behaviors, tasks, knowledge, attitudes, values, predispositions, and aptitudes. Moreover, such expert generated competencies form the basis for university teacher preparation programs, district in-service education, and teacher credentialing requirements. Until competencies are empirically identified, educators will continue to rely on the existing array of questionable measures based on narrow cognitive outcomes, superficial behavioral observation, and *a priori* value-laden judgments.

Unlike existing competencies, decided by experts in the field, this study goes to the source in defining competencies that teachers themselves reveal as characteristics of effective bilingual teaching. This study begins to address the need to empirically validate the mix of competencies representative of effective bilingual teachers. Given validated competencies, teacher-educators can more adequately select and prepare potentially effective bilingual teachers and develop relevant teacher preparation curricula.

METHODOLOGY

Setting

Competencies for effective bilingual teachers were identified in two elementary school districts located near the Mexican border. According to Foote *et al.* (1978), Hispanic students comprise 94.4 percent of the student population in one district and 29.9 percent in the other, while Hispanic staff in those same districts is 38.0 percent and 8.6 percent, respectively. The bilingual staff is proportionately low as compared to student population in most Southern California schools.

Sample

There were 20 elementary bilingual teachers in the sample; twelve were nominated as superior performers. Eight others were randomly selected from the remaining pool of bilingual teachers in the districts. Teachers in the sample had been teaching for an average of six years. Fifteen held bilingual teaching credentials; thirteen had post baccalaureate education. While only 14 teachers in the sample were of Hispanic origin, primarily Mexican-American, 18 teachers were rated as having near native fluency in Spanish. All but two of the subjects were women. The profile for this sample reveals an experienced teacher with good fluency in Spanish and credentialed as a bilingual teacher.

Procedure

Nominations of superior performing bilingual teachers were solicited from persons in supervisory positions such as resource

teachers, program coordinators, principals, and peers. Three nominations as superior performers were required for inclusion in the sample. An attempt was made to match this number of exemplary teachers with other bilingual teachers under contract in the districts.

Participating teachers were told that the purpose of the study was to identify competencies for bilingual teachers that would give research-based direction to preparation programs at the university and district levels. Teachers were given the option not to participate; all but a few seemed eager to contribute to the study.

Data was collected using the Behavioral Events Analysis (BEA), an operant interviewing technique developed by McClelland and Dailey (1974), which is an extension of Flanagan's (1954) Critical Incident Interview. The purpose of the BEA is to identify generic and causal competencies needed for effective job performance. As an interviewing technique, it involves obtaining a number of descriptions of behavioral episodes. Generally, subjects are asked to relate three episodes in which they saw themselves as successful and three in which they viewed themselves as unsuccessful.

A distinguishing characteristic of this interview procedure is that rather than eliciting interpretations, it elicits information from which behaviors can be reconstructed. What further differentiates it is that the interviewees are initially chosen by nominations based upon job performance. Interviewees fall into two categories: those identified as exemplary, superior, or "star" performers and those who represent an average level of performance.

Differentiating incumbents into these two categories is done by asking both supervisory staff and peers to make these nominative differentiations. McClelland and Dailey (1974) have had a good degree of validity in supervisorial nominations based on the behavior of performers (Boyatzis and Burrus, 1977; Klemp *et al.*, 1977).

Behavioral events related by subjects must contain all the elements of a story. To obtain this, interviewers elicit answers to the following type of questions: What led up to the incident? Who was involved? What did you do? What did you say? What was the outcome of the incident? In their entirety, behavioral descriptions contain the perceptions, thoughts, acts, feelings, and conclusions of the subjects interviewed.

Subjects were asked to describe three events in which they felt effective and three events in which they perceived themselves to be ineffective as bilingual teachers. As the teachers verbally depicted each incident, they were asked to recall specific dialogue, actions, and feelings. They were interviewed at their school sites at a time convenient to them. The interviews took a minimum of one hour.

All interviews were tape recorded. The typed interviews transcriptions were the raw data from which competencies were conceptualized. The themes were culled from the raw data, and competencies were identified through content analysis. From the predominating themes, a competency coding system was developed. All interviews were then scored by two independent raters for the presence or absence of identified competencies. The competencies were validated

by interjudge agreement and was statistically determined. Once competencies were validated, they were used to differentiate between teachers rated as superior and teachers not rated superior.

Data Analysis

After the competencies were identified, the next part of the study focused on establishing some measure of reliability for the identified competency, and determining how successfully ratings on these competencies discriminated between the stars and non-stars.

Raters were trained to identify descriptors or other indicators of the various competencies from the transcripts of teacher interviews. They were then instructed to indicate whether the rated behavior reflected a positive or negative instance of a particular competency. Scores for each subject were derived by assigning a +1 or -1 for each positive or negative instance cited by the raters. These scores were then added to obtain a total score for each subject. Initially, each subject received two scores, one from each rater. These two scores were used to generate a co-efficient of inter-rater reliability. The subject scores used to make inter-group comparisons, however, are aggregates of the two rater scores.

A measure of inter-rater reliability was obtained by computing a product-moment correlation co-efficient (Pearson) for the two rater scores assigned to each teacher. The resultant co-efficient was .65, which is significant at the 1 percent level. This co-efficient, though statistically significant, was lower than anticipated. Nevertheless, the correlation co-efficient is significant,

offering an encouraging sign for the future development of a more reliable method of identifying the behaviors associated with competent bilingual teachers.

The second major concern was to determine how well this pilot instrument could differentiate between the stars and the non-stars. This was achieved by testing the significance of differences (t tests) between the mean scores of the stars and non-stars on the six competencies. The results are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF STARS AND NON-STARS BY COMPETENCY

Competency	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	significance level*
1. Positive Regard	16.92	19.38	9.38	9.46	.98	NS
2. Non-Authoritarianism	15.92	8.04	4.88	8.52	2.77	.05
3. Self-Confidence	17.42	12.12	5.75	8.60	2.23	.05
4. Communication Skill	7.25	4.19	2.38	3.08	2.66	.05
5. Varied Methodology	13.00	12.70	9.38	11.18	.62	NS
6. Cultural Knowledge	11.08	8.60	8.00	6.84	.80	NS

*one tailed

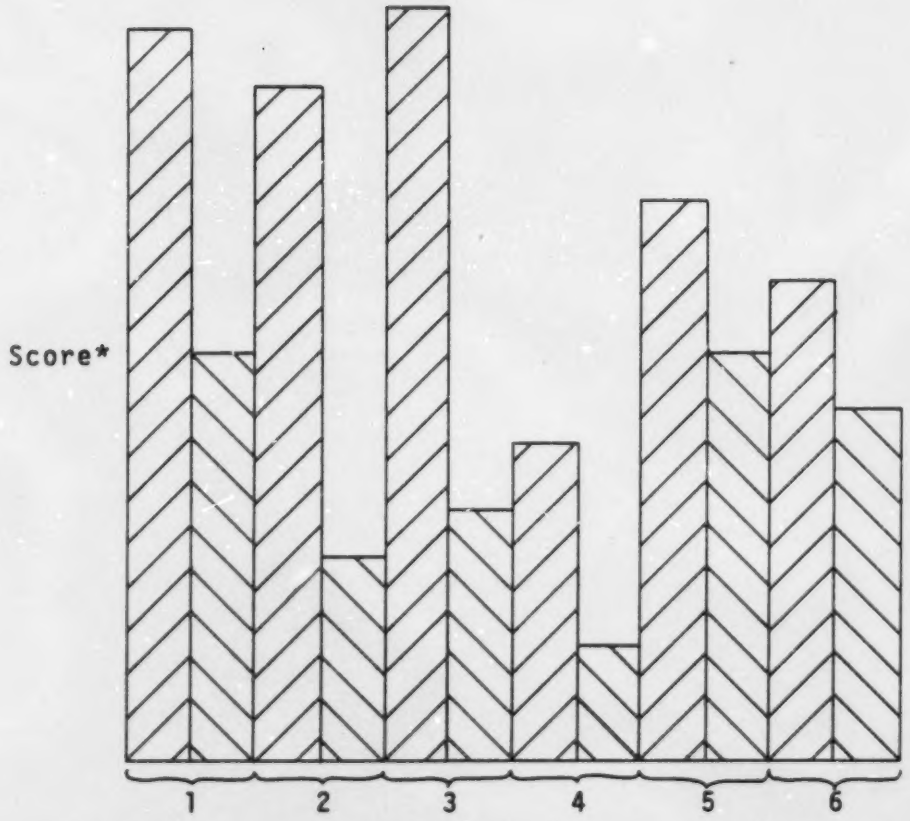
As can be seen, the differences between stars and non-stars were statistically significant in the predicted direction for non-authoritarianism, self-confidence, and communication skills. The remaining competencies were not statistically significant, but the mean scores are greater for the stars in the predicted direction. That is, they have higher positive mean scores (see Figure 1).

In addition to comparing the stars and non-stars on the individual competencies, it was also decided to determine whether a single score, combining all six competencies, could be used to discriminate between stars and non-stars. A t-test was computed on the differences between the mean total score for each group. For mean scores of 81.00 (stars) and 38.5 (non-stars) the resultant $t = 2.01$ was significant ($p \leq .05$).

Finally, a measure of the raters ability to accurately identify stars and non-stars was computed by means of a median test using chi square. The reason for using this procedure was that the raters themselves did not nominate the stars or non-stars. The selection was made prior to their ratings of the individual teachers. The median test was used to indicate how well the rater scores agreed with the nominators in the identification of stars and non-stars. In this procedure, a chi square is calculated using the median score of the combined group scores to form frequency categories. (See Table 2.)

FIGURE 1

STARS VS. NON-STARS COMPETENCIES
(COMBINED RATER SCORES)



1. Positive Regard
2. Non-Authoritarianism
3. Communications Skills
4. Confidence in Own Judgment
5. Varied Methodology
6. Cultural Awareness

*Score Proportioned

TABLE 2

MEDIAN TEST: STARS VS. NON-STARS

	Stars	Non-Stars
Scores above combined median	8	2
Scores below combined median	4	6

$\chi^2 = 5.21$ ($p \leq .05$) N = 20 df = 1

The chi square value is significant, reflecting a high level of agreement between the rater scores and the nominators. As can be seen, using the numbers in Table 2, rater scores correctly identified 67 percent of the stars and 75 percent of the non-stars.

RESULTS

Through the Behavioral Events Analysis, six competency clusters were empirically identified. These competencies and their accompanying subcategories differentiate the effective elementary bilingual teacher from other bilingual teachers. Listed in order of predominance, competencies are: Communication Skills, Positive Regard, Non-Authoritarianism, Pedagogic Flexibility, Sociocultural Knowledge, and Self-Confidence. In this section, each of these categories will be described and illustrated with interview data.

Communication Skills

The most predominant characteristic of superior bilingual teachers is that of communicative skills, that is, the ability

to relate effectively with children and parents. The four components of this competency were identified:

1. Listens to and hears children and parents.
2. Dialogues informally with children and parents.
3. Gives children feedback.
4. Is confrontative without producing defensive behavior.

Superior performing bilingual teachers have listening skills. They demonstrate these with parents as well as children. In reporting a parent conference, one teacher describes the following interaction: "I said, 'What are your concerns?' Then I just let him talk and talk. His concern was that he wanted his child to learn to speak English." Effective elementary bilingual teachers are able to read non-verbal messages equally well. One teacher states, "I can tell immediately when children understand something because their faces light up." Effective teachers can read non-verbal signs for help: "The children were not responding to me. In first grade, when they don't understand something, their minds wander to something else."

Superior performers also engage their students in informal discussions. They take the time to converse with children about their lives outside of the classroom. One teacher reported:

> He opened up to me as a person. He would talk to me about his family. He would tell me about his brothers and sisters. He seemed to feel happy and wanted to share his life with me. I just listened to him and asked him questions. It was just a conversation between two interested parties.

Exemplary bilingual teachers capitalize on informal discussions with children to understand them as people and as learners. Another teacher describes the importance of informal dialogue:

> He needed to be after school to talk to someone and get attention from another person. Quite frankly, that seemed to be more important than school work.

Superior bilingual teachers give their students feedback on their behavior and on their achievement. They praise children far more than reprimanding them. Teachers use praise to encourage students with remarks such as: "That's good!"; "You can do it!"; "¡Que buen trabajo!"; "You did it right."; and "You're smart." Exemplary bilingual teachers also reward achievement by the use of play money, stars, points, and free time.

High performers are able to confront students and parents without making either defensive. Teachers were very skilled at reminding students of broken rules for classroom behavior in a manner that showed respect for the person. This skill is demonstrated by the following episode:

> I abstained from yelling in the first place. I just said, "You didn't go according to the rules that the whole class set up. You know we decided that if you wanted to exchange presents, you were to bring 50 or 75 cents. I don't think it's fair to José that you keep his present. You already have a gift from me."

Confrontative skills are also brought to bear in encounters with parents. Effective bilingual teachers are able to say very difficult things to parents about their won influence on their child's adjustment and achievement in school. One teacher relates a difficult episode:

> I said to the father, "It's very important that ____ be made responsible for arriving at school on time and for bringing his homework. It is important for him to accept the responsibility, not his father. It does not help to make excuses

> for ____." In order to help the child, I had to tell the father about the things he was doing that were harmful to the child.

Positive Regard

The second most predominating characteristic of effective elementary bilingual teachers is that of positive regard as defined by Rogers (1961). Positive regard refers to the teacher's genuine caring and acceptance of children and parents. Five components of this competency were identified through the BEA:

1. Is empathetic towards children, parents, and others.
2. Has high expectations of children.
3. Genuinely cares about children's welfare and learning.
4. Respects children and parents as individuals.
5. Accepts children and parents without judging.

Effective bilingual teachers put themselves in the child's situation. They recognize and at times even anticipate what the child's emotional reaction to a situation might be. One teacher describes a monolingual Spanish-speaking child's adjustment in her class:

> He was very timid. He was afraid to come to me. I had talked with him in Spanish and explained things to him. But I guess until he was in a smaller group with me, he didn't have the confidence. Maybe he felt that it was bad to ask questions in Spanish. He in particular didn't seem comfortable until we started our different groups and there were other children reading aloud in Spanish.

Exemplary bilingual teachers not only expect high achievement from their students, they support attempts made by them. They buoy their self-confidence. In some cases, teachers even empower

children. This characteristic is addressed by one teacher:

> I didn't lower my expectations of the child at first when she was doing poorly; I didn't say to myself, "Maybe she can't achieve more than this." I tried to be kind and strict, but I knew that she had something in there. I think it's very important for a teacher to expect a lot--not to the frustration level--but to where the child is totally challenged. And they're amazing!

Exemplary teachers like children as people and take an interest in their total well-being in and out of school. It is not uncommon for these teachers to actively seek help from other specialists, doctors, nurses, psychologists, social workers, and their own parents.

Another aspect of this characteristic is the loving way in which these teachers speak of their students. They speak of children as "the little ones." They describe children's excitement about learning as "Their eyes just sparkle." On children's achievement they say, "He just blossomed," "She just shined!" or "His face started beaming." In all of these descriptions, teachers convey not only their affection, but also their own excitement at their student's achievements.

Teachers who demonstrate a genuine liking for students also tend to respect them as individuals. They consider children's feelings, emotions, and perceptions. One teacher relates an event in which a child who, eager to share an experience, kept reverting to English on a "Spanish only" day. While the teacher wished to uphold consistent standards for language instruction which, in this case, called for the use of only one language on alternate days, she considered the child's feelings. "It varies with children.

They're people too, and they have feelings. They have different personalities." Effective teachers consider children to be people with a right to their own views and feelings. More importantly, they allow children to be themselves and accommodate them without the fear of losing control.

The exemplary bilingual teacher is also accepting of children and their parents. They are able to distinguish between the negative behavior and the child. While negative behavior is not condoned, neither is the person rejected. As one teacher says, "This child is obnoxious, but I love her."

Non-Authoritarianism

Exemplary bilingual teachers tend to be non-authoritarian in their interactions with children and adults. They are flexible in conducting their classes, setting an egalitarian climate. Specifically, the components of this competency are:

1. Is consultative with children and parents.
2. Is flexible with children and others.
3. Is able to allow children to direct their own learning.
4. Sees teacher's role as a "person" versus "teacher."
5. Creates a positive classroom climate.

Effective bilingual teachers prefer to include children and parents in decision-making. This characteristic is readily visible here:

> I called the mother to a parent conference and informed her that ____ was going to be taught in Spanish. She said, "I can help him at home." _____ had struggled in school his first year, but this year he is just blooming. I would send books home so that she could read with him. I would keep her informed about what

> we were doing, and she was very supportive. The mother felt good about helping him. And he came so well prepared.

Non-authoritarian teachers are flexible. They will stop in the middle of a lesson that is proving unsuccessful and do something else. They will even apologize to their students for an ill prepared lesson. This flexibility is seen in the following incident:

> I was doing a lesson on weather in Spanish. I was trying to translate on the spot and I wasn't doing a very good job. The students were asking me questions, and I couldn't come up with the right terminology. So finally, I just said, "Listen, let's just forget about this lesson. Tomorrow I'll bring in all the information and we'll start again. I apologize. I really wasn't prepared, but tomorrow we're going to hit it again!"

Effective bilingual teachers allow children to make choices about what they will study and what language they will use, as demonstrated in this story:

> This child does quite well in English, but my feeling is that we will help her more by working with her in Spanish. She is battling with whether she wants to do her work in Spanish or English. So I let her choose. This moring for the first time she decided she wanted to learn those letter sounds in Spanish.

This type of decision-making differs markedly from that of choosing how to spend free time in the classroom.

Bilingual teachers who are especially effective can see themselves as "persons" rather than "teachers" or authority figures. They admit to their errors in front of children and are able to laugh at themselves. They are not afraid to make mistakes in using Spanish; in fact, they ask children to correct them. One

teacher reports an episode in which she lost her patience and yelled at a child:

> After recess I went over to her desk and asked, "Are you mad at me?" She said, "No." I said, "I'm really sorry I yelled at you. I just didn't get enough sleep last night. I took it out on you. It's not fair." And she said, "It's OK." Kids are so understanding!

Superior bilingual teachers create a climate of trust and fair play; equality is important. They give everyone a turn at achieving, sharing, and participating. This competency is illustrated by the following teaching strategy:

> It's just sight reading. But we do a lot of things with their names. Instead of calling on them, I have their names written on a deck of tag cards and I pull them out at random. This way I don't miss calling some people who are shy. They all know how to read everybody's name.

Pedagogic Flexibility

A fourth area of competency for the bilingual teacher is the area of teaching methodology. This competency is defined as having knowledge of instructional theory. It also involves using varied methods and activities for instruction. The bilingual teacher who has this competency will have its components as well:

1. Is eclectic in the use of teaching methods and activities.
2. Uses creative approaches in teaching and motivating children.
3. Is diagnostic and prescriptive in approaching children's learning.
4. Gives children individual attention.
5. Encourages children to be active learners.

Good bilingual teachers use an eclectic approach, using every opportunity to teach. An exemplary teacher exhibits this competency:

> I used a variety of techniques to teach kindergarteners vowel sounds in Spanish. I would use all kinds of tricks and games. I started off by talking about sounds that animals make. Then we spent some time just on the sounds. We sang a song about animals. We played a game where they get to keep the picture card if they can tell me what vowel the object begins with. They keep the cards and at the end of the game we count them. That's another way to get counting experience. They learn the sounds, they learn their numbers, and they are remembering. There are so many things involved in teaching.

Bilingual teachers in the sample of "stars" use creative approaches in teaching and motivating children. Varied ways in which teachers engage children's interest include using puppets for language instruction, shower rings and cards for word files, and role playing for assessment of learning. These teachers seem to tap their own creative skills in motivating children. Teachers who enjoy the theatre will write plays from elementary basal readers or favorite stories. Those fond of dancing will encourage students to express themselves to music. One teacher encourages her students to be leaders by teaching their classmates to dance. While some of these examples may not seem unusual, they do demonstrate the effective teacher's readiness to make learning fun and active rather than passive.

Superior bilingual teachers are diagnostic and prescriptive in assessing children's learning. They seem to know how to pace learning. They consider the child's preferred learning style and try to match it with the appropriate teaching method. One teacher relates an incident in which she investigated the placement of

a Spanish-speaking child:

> This child was placed in a "B" group by the district psychologist. But he is a Spanish-speaking child. So I screened him for English-language proficiency. I felt that this little guy was misplaced. He should have been put in an "A" group. I wondered if it was the result of his being a non-English speaker that he did not fare well on the tests. So I went through and looked at all the testing.

While this teacher discovered that the placement of the child was correct and temporary, she still brought him into her group for language help.

Bilingual teachers who are "star" performers give children individual attention. This differs from individualized instruction, involving responding to a child in difficulty by offering individual help. Such assistance can be given before school, during class time, at lunch, or after school. One teacher discovered that a boy in her class was doing poorly because his parents recently separated. She responded by giving him what she terms, "super-attention." She says, "In math I would take him aside. We sat down and we worked out problems. I found out that he knew a lot more than I thought he did."

Encouraging children to be active learners seems to be characteristic of excellent bilingual teachers. This competency is related to creative methodology, because many creative teachers' strategies do involve active participation by children. Active learning may include such techniques as using manipulative objects, taking field trips, or enacting going to the bank.

Sociocultural Knowledge

Competent bilingual teachers have sufficient knowledge of the target language to make them responsive to children and parents. They can interact effectively with culturally different persons and are knowledgeable and sensitive to the differences in life styles so that they do not misinterpret or misjudge culturally related behavior. Moreover, as students of language, they are aware of the intricacies of second-language learning. Components of this competency area are:

1. Has sufficient fluency in target language to communicate effectively.
2. Knows and values children's cultural life style.
3. Values importance of children's first language.
4. Knows of effective methods and activities for bilingual students.
5. Knows and is committed to the theory and philosophy of bilingual education.

One of the characteristics most cited as consistent with effective bilingual teaching by teachers in the sample was knowledge of the target language. While this characteristic was not predominant in the interview data, it may have been subcategorized in other competency areas, such as communication skills or positive regard. Fluency in this area does not refer to native fluency but to the degree of conversational ability required to make children and parents comfortable. Teachers remark: "I talked to the parents and they understood." "The minute he knew I spoke Spanish, he felt more comfortable in my class." "The mother showed confidence with me because I can

speak the language."

In this competency area, subjects cited knowledge of the culture and community as second in importance to effective bilingual teaching. These teachers not only know the culture, they value it in observable ways. For example, the teacher who brokers for the child with both the school and the parents:

> At this school, there was a camp program. The school couldn't understand why many of the Mexican parents refused to let their girls go. I explained to them that in the Mexican culture, it is hard for parents to let their daughter go away along for a weekend.

This teacher goes on to validate the family's cultural preferences:

> The parents felt bad about not letting their daughter go. They liked cooperating with the school. I talked to several of the parents. I told them that they didn't have to send their girls there. It wasn't an obligation. I think they went away with a good feeling knowing that they hadn't started a riot or anything.

Related to the language fluency is the teacher's active validation of the importance of the target language. Effective bilingual teachers teach subject matter in the students' first language. They give Spanish an equal status with English, and they encourage their students to accept and use Spanish. One teacher puts it this way:

> One of my purposes is to get the kids to realize that speaking Spanish is perfectly all right. The kids are beginning to understand now that it really is okay to speak another language. We have to also get the children that speak Tagalgo, or whatever, to understand that it's okay to speak another language.

Teachers who are seen as exemplary have a knowledge of teaching methods for use with bilingual students. They demonstrate their

ability to successfully teach Spanish reading, English-as-a-second-language, and oral language development. They integrate the culture into their instructional activities. All the children in their classrooms are exposed to similarities and differences between cultures.

"Star" bilingual teachers understand the educational philosophy behind bilingual education. They are familiar with the theory related to bilingual programs and instruction and are committed to them. A teacher reports on her efforts to expose what she terms "four myths" of bilingual education:

> One is that it's un-American. Another is that it has no economic advantage. The third myth is that it's not needed. Fourth is that it's a remedial program.
>
> The people who make these charges are sincere. Some of them are administrators and teachers. So I researched these ideas and prepared a conference presentation where I argued against these myths. After my session, people came up and thanked me for giving them some arguments to use when confronted by such charges.

This episode also illustrates the teacher's advocacy role for bilingual education.

Self-Confidence

Although not most predominant, self-confidence was identified by the BEA to be a characteristic of competent bilingual teachers who are described as having the self assurance to trust their own judgment and act on it. Sub-categories of this competency area include:

1. Has strong convictions regarding teaching and learning.

2. Questions the validity of expert opinion.

3. Takes risks based on own judgment.

4. Is reflective and self-assessing of own behavior.

5. Is confident in own abilities and those of students.

Exemplary bilingual teachers have very strong convictions regarding most aspects of teaching and learning. They have opinions about the relevance of particular theories to their teaching situation. They have tested teaching methods and formed opinions about the appropriateness of these for their bilingual students. Moreover, they have a definite sense about the role of the teacher.

To illustrate the type of convictions effective bilingual teachers act upon, consider this episode:

> I was supposed to teach reading last year using these lessons that didn't make any sense to me. The children were expected to read things like "Pon el queso suizo en la basura."/"Put the Swiss cheese in the trash." My expectations of what children are to do when they read is not this. It was ridiculous. The children were never going to see this sentence anywhere or use it in conversation. I got very frustrated because it was my job to teach them to read, and these reading lessons were not doing it.

Superior performing teachers question expert opinion, whether it presents itself in the form of educational specialists, testing, or curriculum material. The questioning often leads to risk-taking. Supportive data for this characteristic is available in the outcome of the previous episode. That teacher continues:

> We had a workshop on Thursday, and I kept explaining these things to the curriculum specialist. I told him I needed things that the kids could see. I want them to read sentences that they will use in everyday life. Where am I going to get Swiss cheese to throw in the

> trash? I was in a real bind until I told him, "This is what I want to do instead!" So now he's going to come to my room and start observing my reading method. I think that's one good thing about new teachers. We're strong enough to say, "Hey, this isn't working" when the majority of other people have just said, "Well, they say we have to do it this way."

Being reflective and assessing their own actions is also characteristic of effective bilingual teachers. They continually evaluate their own effectiveness and integrate their own feedback into the next lesson or activity. One teacher reports:

> Today everbody wanted to read. These are kids who came into my class reading zero. They are now reading and it's because the introduction of the vocabulary was done properly. That's the way I check myself. I haven't taught something properly if they aren't able to do the reading. Then I know I failed. So I say, "Let's go back." Even if it takes another week. But I want these kids to know what it is they are supposed to be learning.

This example demonstrates the effective teacher's focus on herself as the responsible agent. She does not blame the child for not learning, as do many less effective teachers.

The competent bilingual teachers' professional self-image is strong. They also recognize their students' strengths and abilities. These are not teachers who operate on a "deficit model." One teacher speaks of her confidence in the ability of kindergarteners:

> I'm so pleased that they are learning the sounds so quickly now. It was like pulling teeth at first. It made me wonder if I should be teaching them the sounds so early. Yet, I feel very strongly that kindergarten children are perfectly capable of learning the sound of a letter.

DISCUSSION

A weakness in the pilot study was the lack of more significant consistency between the raters. This may have been due to a lack of clarity in the competency descriptions used by the raters. It may also have been due to the fact that descriptors indicative of particular competencies had to be identified from transcripts. Even though the interviews attempted to focus clearly on ideas and concrete situations, the interview process is a dialogue. This means that there will be many uncompleted thoughts reflected in the transcript.

A second weakness in this preliminary study is the need for a higher percentage of correctly identified stars and non-stars, a problem which is connected to inter-rater reliability. As the ratings between raters become more consistent with each other, they will more accurately reflect the nominators' choices.

Three ways in which inter-rater reliability can be increased are: (1) describing the types of indicators characteristic of a given competency by giving characteristic examples from the transcripts, (2) training the raters with these examples, and (3) including another type of behavior measure to augment the transcript content analysis. Other measures might be classroom observations, parent ratings, and student achievement.

It is important to note that this preliminary study represents the conceptualization of competencies for elementary bilingual teachers. Questions will arise concerning the lack of significant differences between stars and non-stars on Cultural Knowledge,

Positive Regard, and Pedagogic Flexibility. Possible reasons for this lack of differentiation may be due to incorrect scoring by raters, overlap between competencies, or greater pluralistic views among teachers in this multicultural society.

Nevertheless, the statistical analysis is highly supportive of the direction we are pursuing in this study. These competencies are indeed related to differential abilities in bilingual teachers. Although the sample of elementary bilingual teachers is small, the findings appear consistent from several analytic approaches. Clearly, the findings are not conclusive, but they can be considered a positive beginning upon which to build a validated model of bilingual teacher competence.

CONCLUSION

The need for replication of the findings in this study are obvious. Further testing and replication of the results on additional samples of elementary bilingual teachers is recommended before using these results for selection, training, and certification purposes. However, given further substantiation of the findings the implications are various.

1. Bilingual teacher competencies will be empirically defined.
2. Training of elementary bilingual teachers can be designed to develop the competencies validated in the study.
3. Competence measures can be a criterion-validated basis for the certification of bilingual teachers.

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